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Transatlantic Currents: Exploring the past, present and future of global historical archaeology

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Transatlantic Currents: Exploring the Past, Present and Future of Global Historical Archaeology

Abstract

The past, present and future of global historical archaeology is addressed first through a comparative analysis of the development of the discipline in North American and the British Isles, and secondly by a consideration of the recent expansion of interest around the world and particularly in postcolonial contexts. Drawing from a range of global case studies, it is argued that the most productive way forward for the discipline lies in its ability to productively engage with contemporary societal problems and global challenges in locally-rooted and contingent ways.

As first defined, global historical archaeology was unashamedly dominated by North American concerns and voices, which occasionally resulted in the muting and eliding of disparate global experiences. Increasingly, and positively, scholars around the world and outside of the North American tradition have begun to engage with and direct practices in and of historical archaeology. In considering the future of the discipline, a key question is whether there is, or whether there should be, any unity in practice, focus, and framework. Having spent my career thus far practicing historical archaeology on both sides of the Atlantic, and seeing first-hand the divergences in practice between those regions, I have come to value diversity over unity. There is a richness to the many varieties of global practice; with an astounding variety of contexts, frameworks, questions and interpretations. Greater attention to and respect for these variations to me constitutes the way forward for historical archaeology, as is the increasing emphasis upon situating historical archaeology as politically engaged and relevant. Rather than exporting some version of North American-style historical archaeology around the globe, I would prefer to see a future for the discipline when the practices outside of North America not only are taken into consideration by the historic disciplinary core, but in fact can begin to drive innovation and develop global synergies. The principal arena for such emergent synergies centres on politics, engagement, and social justice, particularly in postcolonial contexts.

Before addressing these current and future directions, it is useful to review and consider commonalities and divergences in transatlantic approaches to historical archaeology in the traditional centres for the field, North America and the British isles. As such, this article inevitably draws heavily from Anglophone historical archaeology. My principal aim is to capitalise upon my own transatlantic career to reflect upon the different trajectories of research into the material legacies of the last five hundred or so years, with a

particular emphasis upon the development and character of Irish historical archaeology. I set out suggestions for the future in terms of broader lessons that might be learned from the regional traditions, and then secondly I consider key themes for the future drawing on the expansion of historical archaeological research outside of the Anglophone world. While I highlight a series of global projects as exemplars of newly emergent practice, the discussion is far from an exhaustive summary. Instead, I focus primarily upon the manner in which historical archaeology can and is engaging with societal problems and global challenges, albeit in locally-rooted and contingent ways.

From my own perspective, one of the more remarkable developments of the last fifteen years has been a massive increase in interest in the archaeological study of the later historical period in the United Kingdom and in Ireland. Indeed, the development of later historical archaeology in Ireland, north and south, is nothing short of miraculous. Prior to the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, which ushered in an uncertain but nonetheless crucial period of reflection as part of the Northern Ireland peace process, any efforts to consider the archaeology of the post-medieval period was liable to bring accusations of partisanship-focusing only on the 'archaeology of the English.' Given the timing of its emergence, Irish historical archaeology is therefore exceptionally politically aware in a manner that has not always been the case in North American historical archaeology, where the archaeological study of colonial life is a long accepted and venerable tradition. Aspects of North American historical archaeology certainly are politically engaged, most notably the influential strand of critical archaeology which focuses upon a critique of capitalism (e.g., McGuire 2008; Leone 1999, 2005); archaeologies of the African Diaspora (e.g., Ogundiran and Falola 2007); and the growing body of literature on the historical archaeology of Native communities (e.g., Silliman 2009, 2014; Mrozowski et al. 2009; Jordan, this issue). But as I will explore

further below, contemporary Irish historical archaeology has additionally benefited from its emergence at a time when public engagement and inclusive archaeologies are widely practiced, encouraged, and theorised, allowing for a new archaeological praxis aligned with peacebuilding and central to conflict transformation.

Transatlantic Comparisons: The Development and Character of Historical Archaeology

Different theoretical influences have long framed research in historical archaeology on both sides of the Atlantic. The distinctive geography and national histories of Europe, in the estimation of British archaeologist Paul Courtney (2009b:93), has shaped the character of post-medieval archaeology: “what Pierre Bourdieu has termed *habitus* influences different trans-Atlantic outlooks...the patchwork of distinctive European *pays* a few miles across contrasts with the vast distances of many American regions...a Europe full of barriers... not an ‘open’ frontier.” National boundaries and the distinctiveness of national histories and European regional engagements foster a wide variety of distinct research questions and agendas, if at times also hampering pan-European engagement with historical archaeology. The diverse character of the European Union itself, with its 28 member states speaking 24 different official languages, exemplifies the nature of the challenge (Brooks 2013:5).

Perhaps even more significant is the importance of addressing issues of continuity from the medieval to the modern. From a New World perspective, 1492 may seem a convenient starting point for historical archaeology, coinciding as it does with what is considered a major historical rupture in the histories of many indigenous peoples and by extension of the Europeans who encountered them. But how important was this date and event from a European perspective? Can we really view the medieval period as one of

tradition and stasis, awaiting transformation through the mechanism of Atlantic expansion? Or, as long argued by scholars like Frans Verhaeghe (1997:28) “the medieval world equally went through numerous changes, some of them being quite fundamental such as the emergence of new urban societies, networks and cultures, and most if not all leading to greater complexity in terms of society and social stratification, economy, and social and cultural behaviour. This constitutes yet another good reason to pay at least as much attention to what survived from the medieval period (and if possible why) as to what changed and why.” Consideration of the complexity and dynamism of late medieval Europe exposes the limitations of some of North American historical archaeology’s most cherished models, the most obvious of which being the Georgian world view, which oversaw an apparent abandonment of medieval precepts and practices presumed to still be in operation as late as the turn of the eighteenth century.

The anthropological character of North American historical archaeology is clearly one of its most distinctive strengths (Schuyler 1970, 1988), but this has inspired a tendency on the part of North Americans to believe that by virtue of being anthropologists, they are also *de facto* more theoretically sophisticated than their European counterparts, who are more often trained in history or in archaeology as a stand-alone discipline. It cannot be denied that since the 1966 establishment of the Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology, the discipline in the United Kingdom in particular gained the reputation of excellence in descriptive studies of finds, buildings, and landscapes, but lagged far behind when it came to considering the meaning and significance of archaeological data. A significant critique of this brand of post-medieval archaeology coalesced in the 1990s, encapsulated by the theoretically-informed work of Matthew Johnson (1996; 1999:21), who himself overtly referenced the “greater intellectual strength of North American historical archaeology”,

alongside a collection of papers (Tarlow and West 1999) that showcased the work of a new generation of self-described later historical archaeologists. When West (1999: 1) wrote that “post-medieval archaeology does not have a flourishing image as a research area... years of data collection have not been illuminated by questions centred on people,” she was expressing the frustrations of many on both sides of the Atlantic with the traditional, data-driven approach of post-medieval archaeology.

However, this situation has now been almost completely reversed, to the extent that there is growing concern amongst professionals about the erosion of material culture knowledge, exacerbated in recent years by the untimely loss of two key finds specialists, Geoff Egan (1951–2010) and Paul Courtney (1955-2013). This reversal in emphasis is owed in part to the influence of North American approaches, but also to the impact of the strength of post-processual approaches to interpretation that characterise teaching in a number of UK higher education institutions, which has produced a new generation of scholars willing and able to apply theoretical frameworks to their study. This welcome development, however, has also occurred at a time when university timetables and finances increasingly compress and limit the time and infrastructure required for the intensive field and laboratory training essential to the development of a professional archaeologist. Most students are introduced to material culture through concepts like materiality and object agency, but few are taught how to tell the difference between creamware and pearlware, or how to identify and date a transfer print pattern and more importantly, how that knowledge can actually contribute to data-rich yet sophisticated analyses of early modern production and consumption exemplified by the work of scholars like Alasdair Brooks (2009). Influenced as well by the move away from traditional material culture studies, historical archaeology in the British Isles has increasingly begun to emphasise contemporary archaeology: applying

theoretical constructs to interpret the present day, and blurring the disciplinary boundaries between archaeology, cultural geography, and cultural studies (Harrison 2011, this volume; Horning 2011).

In compiling my thoughts for this article, I returned to a similar effort to reflect on the past present and future of historical archaeology that formed the core of an academic conference in 2008 and subsequent book (Horning and Palmer 2009). There, our aim was to tap into the diversity of approaches and to critically address the sense of fragmentation that seemed to characterise practice on the islands of Britain and Ireland specifically. At the time, the relatively small community of scholars focusing on the material legacies of the last five hundred or so years appeared riven by factionalism—separating into discrete groupings of post-medieval archaeologists, industrial archaeologists, and contemporary archaeologists—to the detriment of the overall discipline. What emerged from those conversations was a sense that differences were in many ways illusory. In short, approaches constantly change.

The first volume of the journal *Post-Medieval Archaeology* in 1967 defined the chronological scope of the society as “the period of the unification of states within the British Isles, the establishment of Britain upon the path of maritime colonial expansion and the initial stages of industrial growth”, coinciding in America with the period “extending from the arrival of the first European settlers up to the Declaration of Independence” (Butler, 1967:1). From the first, then, post-medieval archaeology in Britain employed a terminal date of c.1750-1780. In the same inaugural issue, Ivor Noël Hume (1967:104) described American historical archaeology as intended “to foster the study of non-aboriginal archaeology in the western hemisphere” and whose “sphere of interest was limited by culture rather than by time.” Few would agree now with Noël Hume’s cultural exclusionism, just as post-medieval

archaeology no longer employs a cut-off date--as particularly exemplified by the rise of contemporary archaeology.

What of the current contrast between North America and the British Isles?

Significant differences do exist between the ways in which historical archaeologists on either side of the Atlantic select and approach evidence. For example, buildings archaeology is a well-established branch of post-medieval archaeology, and in some places is the dominant branch (Hicks and Horning 2007). But in North America, studies of standing buildings are still generally the province of architectural historians, not archaeologists. Similarly, one might point to the varying incorporation of scientific analytical techniques in historical archaeology. The study of post-medieval faunal material is unfortunately exceptionally rare outside of North America (Thomas 2009), while use of LIDAR and large scale survey to understand the evolution of historical landscapes (Dalglish 2009) is less common in North America, understandably a factor of the immense differences in scale.

In North America, a major thread of research (albeit much of it compliance driven) focuses on rural domestic sites (e.g., Cabak et al. 1999; Wilson 1990). As acknowledged by Paul Courtney (2009b:97), however, the “below ground archaeology of everyday agrarian life and society” is probably the most archaeologically neglected topic in both Britain and Ireland. Legislative frameworks matter as well, often lagging far behind academic interest in particular site types. In the Republic of Ireland, for example, this lack of attention to vernacular sites is further exacerbated by narrow readings of the law. National Monuments legislation stipulates that sites pre-dating 1700 are automatically eligible for inclusion on the Record of Monuments and Places, giving them some measure of protection, while a strong case has to be made to include later sites. The result has been that later sites have been only sporadically added, with only County Cork routinely considering eighteenth and

nineteenth-century sites to be of potential archaeological value. Other county archaeological surveys tend to stop coverage before 1700, and in some cases, 1600. This attitude towards later historical sites can be directly attributed to the politics of nationhood, and specifically the emergence of the newly independent Republic of Ireland: “From the outset the new state was very clear about the past it believed more appropriate to commemorate, or more properly, those pasts that it chose to ignore. This selective memory was effectively enshrined in the Republic of Ireland’s National Monuments legislation, beginning with the Act of 1930, in which the period after AD1700 was officially considered not to be of archaeological interest” (Rynne 2009:168).

The ongoing contestation over the values placed upon particular heritages is underscored by the revelation in 2012 that post-1700 sites were quietly being removed from the RMP (McDonald 2011). Concerns from developers were cited, as developments in the well-documented and surveyed Co. Cork, for example, might have to mitigate impacts on recorded post-medieval sites, whereas in Donegal they might not because the Archaeological Survey of Donegal only recorded sites pre-dating 1600. The ubiquitous and appealing character of Ireland’s later historical built and material heritage, exemplified by the thousands of extant eighteenth and nineteenth buildings and streetscapes, paradoxically serves as a disincentive towards their study and preservation. That any associated archaeological deposits will be replete with significant quantities of industrially-produced material culture also presents a significant pragmatic challenge to a system in which the state owns all archaeological objects and, as such, has a responsibility to curate and house the assemblages derived from archaeological excavations.

Competing Frameworks: Interpreting Historical Archaeology

Far more important than the differences in sites investigated and even the variable legislative frameworks guiding archaeological investigation and interpretation are the questions posed of archaeological sites, which vary considerably on either side of the Atlantic and between countries and regions in the British Isles and Europe. The importance of considering colonialism is one such issue. Without doubt, colonialism is key to historical archaeology in lands that experienced intensive settler colonialism, as in the Americas and Australasia, but recognition of both the operation of smaller scale colonialism, as well as the impact of the colonised on the coloniser, is still not widely recognised or appreciated. Both Paul Courtney (2009a, 2009b) and Natasha Mehler (2013) have commented from a European standpoint about the place of colonialism in European historical archaeology. In considering the general British disinterest in employing colonialism as a framing device, Courtney (2009a:181) found a “collective amnesia and embarrassment about colonialism.....anyone over 60 was probably brought up on the history and glories of the British Empire. Anyone younger has probably gone through their education without the barest mention of empire and colonialism.” In Mehler’s estimation (2013:40), continental Europeans are even less likely to engage with colonialism: “the subjects of colonialism or immigration as a major component of globalisation have hardly been dealt with by non-British European archaeologists.” As an American-trained historical archaeologist working in Ireland, colonialism is a central theme of my own research (Horning 2013b), and it also features significantly in the work of other Irish historical archaeologists (e.g., Lyttleton and Rynne 2009). But considerations of colonialism within Europe--even within a place like Ireland which experienced a form of colonization--are inevitably different in content, form, and impact than such considerations are in lands where indigenous populations were clearly displaced and dispossessed.

Irish historical archaeology is not alone within Europe in addressing colonialism. There has been a recent explosion of studies throughout Scandinavia that are overtly addressing the colonial histories of nations including Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Norway, and Iceland. Central to this new concentration on exploring Scandinavian colonial histories and legacies is, as summarised by two of its key practitioners, Jonas Nordin and Magdalena Naum (2013:4), a desire to challenge the prevailing view that somehow “Scandinavian participation in colonial politics was benign and their interactions with the encountered peoples in Africa, Asia and America were gentler and based on collaboration rather than extortion and subjugation.” The deconstruction of this dominant narrative is ongoing, via scholarship on Danish engagements in the Caribbean (Armstrong et al 2013), Africa (Weiss 2013) and in South Asia (Jørgensen 2013); Swedish colonies in the New World (DeCunzo 2013) and the impact of indigenous American culture in Sweden (Nordin 2012, 2013); and on the operation of colonialism within Scandinavia, e.g., the displacement of Finns (Ekengren 2013) and particularly the treatment of Sami peoples by an expansive, capitalist Swedish state (Fur 2006; Ojala 2009; Lindmark 2013).

Scholars in the Iberian Peninsula are also critically engaging with colonialism and its legacies, influenced in particular by the rich scholarship on colonialism emanating from South America which has fostered interest in Spanish and Portuguese colonialism (Funari and Senatore 2015; Schavelzon 2014, 2000), as well as the longer history of exploration of Spanish colonialism in North America (e.g., Deagan 1987, 2003). M. Dores Cruz (2007) has written eloquently about the lasting legacy of Portuguese colonialism within Portugal through an analysis of school textbooks during the Estado Novo period (1933-1974) and critical reflections on her own Portuguese upbringing at the time of decolonization. Portuguese colonization in Africa has also been productively explored by Innocent Pikirayi

(2009), while scholars within Portugal have produced a series of foundational studies of the Portuguese material culture which can be found around the world (Gomes and Casimiro 2013; Teixeira et al.2015) and which directly impact upon understandings of the Portuguese colonial reach.

Capitalism, and its impacts, remains one, if not the, key concern that drives much research in North American historical archaeology and whether it is, *de facto*, the archaeology of capitalism (e.g., Leone 1999, Matthews 2010, Wurst and Mrozowski, this volume). At its most basic level, this is undeniably true. When you look at the archaeology of the last 500 years, anywhere on the planet, capitalism has been and continues to be influential. Indeed, many of the studies I referenced above in relation to regional traditions of historical archaeology also acknowledge global interconnectedness in terms of the movement of goods. Differences and tensions arise when considering issues of scale, and the extent to which an overemphasis on capitalism as an all-pervading force can mask real regional differences and over-simplify past human experiences (Croucher and Weiss 2011). In a South American example, Brooks and Rodriguez Y (2012:85) overtly address this tension between considering Venezuelan historical archaeology from a global perspective and considering its local context. For them, that tension is the defining attribute of Venezuelan historical archaeology “being simultaneously part of the West and its periphery, between engagement with and separation from global trade, between cosmopolitanism and local context, are a natural part of South American historical archaeology.” Similarly, Pedro Funari (1999; Funari and Ferreira, this volume) has argued against the North American focus on capitalism by stressing the continued operation and influence of indigenous and pre-capitalist feudal European practices in Brazil.

Returning to Europe, Mark Pluciennik, Antoon Mientjes and Enrico Giannitrapani have considered the character of the capitalist engagements in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century rural Sicily. In examining the landscapes and material culture associated predominantly with the landless, agricultural poor, they eschew a straight narrative of domination and resistance to instead explore the operation of aspiration amongst their study population. In their estimation, this focus “ascribes to rural workers and their culture their own dynamics and agency, rather than characterizing them only through reactions to the powerful, although it was clearly an unequal situation” (Pluciennik et al. 2004:29). Arguments over the exact role of capitalism unfortunately can and do become acrimonious, and efforts to challenge and complicate monolithic constructions of capitalism through moving away from straightforward narratives of domination and resistance have attracted fierce criticism (Orser 2011:539). Regardless of the specific role played by capitalism in shaping local societies around the globe, for me a point of congruence amongst practitioners lies in a genuine concern over the continuing operation of inequality and oppression that can be linked in one way or another with the emergence of the modern world and the variable operation of the forces of capitalism, colonialism, and globalisation.

The Past in the Present: An Emerging Praxis

Turning attention to such issues of inequality and injustice, for me the most intellectually exciting avenues in later historical archaeology at present are the increasingly sophisticated ways in which scholars are attempting to address contemporary issues through the study of the past by engaging communities beyond the academic and professional worlds. Here I want to distinguish between versions of community archaeology that capitalise on volunteer labour and community funding to perform otherwise traditional

archaeological projects with those much more difficult, and rare, projects that prioritise inclusivity and co-production (Horning 2013c; Schmidt 2014). How we move from one model to the other is not straightforward, but doing so carries the potential for precipitating genuine social change. Shifting from traditional top down models of public archaeology into collaborative practice effectively requires philosophical reskilling. Advocacy and inclusivity necessitate a lessening of control, and a conscious (not tacit) acknowledgment that one is making a choice in how to interpret and approach the past. Doing so without compromising or abandoning our concomitant ethical responsibilities to the dead and the actualities of their experiences is extraordinarily difficult. Less philosophically challenging, but perhaps of greater importance to our collaborators is the reality that often it is the process of community archaeology that matters more than the outcome.

The real risk here, and one that I have agonised over throughout my career, is that in relinquishing control and in prioritising the present over the past we simply construct useable pasts: narratives that are explicitly formulated to serve a contemporary need. Balancing responsibilities to the past and to the present is a deadly serious endeavour, as useable pasts lie at the heart of nation and empire building and in those contexts, inevitably privilege the elite and, in a capitalist world, justify inequality. Focusing intentionally on the working class, or colonised other, is a common riposte to concerns over elite bias, but we cannot just create heroic figures in opposition to dominant narratives. Ultimately, what is our purpose? Is it illuminating past lives and analysing the underpinning of inequality or is it possible to use archaeology to challenge capitalist driven inequality in the present and, at the same time, do justice to the complexity of past experiences?

An answer, if not necessarily the answer, lies in pragmatic philosophy. Here I take inspiration from the work of Stephen Mrozowski (2014:343), who advocates a pragmatic approach which specifically requires practitioners to “explicitly identify the practical outcomes of their research” and recognise that “:social science needs to be politically engaged.” Of course, the aim of situating archaeology as political engagement is neither necessarily complementary with nor conducive to inclusivity in archaeological practice. Yet I believe the two are not incompatible, and that the combination, with all of its inherent tensions and contradictions, may in fact lead to more meaningful, deeper understandings and potentially new praxis. To illustrate the potential of such an approach, I offer up ongoing efforts to actively situate archaeological practice in Northern Ireland within the ongoing peace process (Horning et al. 2015).

Contemporary Northern Ireland is a divided society. Its communities are principally drawn from two main traditions, Catholic and Protestant, who self-identify with, respectively, the Gaelic Irish and the British who came to Ireland as part of a series of colonial schemes in the seventeenth century. Geographical segregation is the norm, only 8% of schoolchildren are educated in an integrated environment, and, in Belfast, over 80 so-called ‘peace walls’ are still deployed to physically separate communities in conflict. While the high levels of violence associated with the thirty years of the period known as The Troubles (1969-1998) have thankfully decreased and society has become “normalised”, security alerts still continue on a daily basis and the risk of a return to violence is ever present. The psychological impact of conflict is manifested in high levels of post-traumatic stress disorder and elevated suicide rates that have been directly attributed to the legacy of conflict (Tomlinson 2012), particularly affecting those of my generation, who grew up during the height of the conflict in the 1970s. Paradoxically, the structure of the peace process

itself impedes full integration of society as it is founded upon a principle of ensuring parity between the two communities. Parity and mutual respect were and are critical aspects of peacebuilding, but inevitably reify difference, rendering efforts to explore and encourage commonalities over difference extremely challenging, but all the more critical to building a truly peaceful society. Directly implicated in contemporary difference are the still contested and unresolved histories of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when the English Crown extended control through the mechanism of plantation, a colonial effort to supplant the Gaelic Irish population that, despite intent, did not succeed in this aim. The archaeological record of this period overtly complicates the accepted dichotomous narratives through highlighting complexity and particularly, extensive evidence for shared practice and, in particular, the reliance of plantation settlements upon the demographically dominant Irish population (Breen 2012; Horning 2001; Donnelly 2005; Horning 2013b).

Over the last decade, archaeological projects focusing on the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century have consciously begun incorporating community groups and schools in excavations, with an emphasis upon the field experience and the potential for shared discovery. Such immersive practice gives individuals the opportunity to physically engage with process of discovery and importantly, the space to individually decide what the evidence actually means. Indicative of the positive impact of these efforts are comments from one of the community groups involved, the Ballintoy and District Local Archaeological and Historical Society (2013): “the knowledge we gained of the complicated nature of the Plantation period challenged our previously held views. Members ... from different backgrounds are now more willing to discuss the impact of the Plantation... willing to reconsider their own identities in light of what they have learnt through engaging with professional archaeologists.” From these comments, and others, it is clear that the physical

engagement with the discovery process allows individuals to make up their own minds, in their own time, about the significance of the evidence. This is not a process to be controlled by heritage professionals, but it is one that we can set into motion.

To date, efforts have been focused on those groups who traditionally would be open to explorations of the past—local history groups and schools (Horning 2013; Horning et al. 2015). The success of these efforts, measured through testimonials such as that cited above, has led us to develop a more challenging series of projects in conjunction with the Corrymeela Community, a shared governance civil society formed in 1965 with the aim of bringing people together from across the sectarian divide in safe and neutral surroundings. The steering group for the project, made up of trained Corrymeela facilitators, archaeologists, and museum professionals, is generally agreed on the importance of engaging groups that are more difficult to reach (including both ex-paramilitaries and survivors of Troubles-related violence) with the tangibility of plantation-period archaeology in an effort to impact upon the present and future. However, agreement on precisely how to do this, and indeed what the evidence might actually have to contribute to peace-building, is less straightforward but has led to some very productive discussions.

Most important has been the evolution of the programme itself. Together we have drafted and signed up to a code of practice that is agreed with participants at the start of any programme. In addition to being upfront about our aim to connect an exploration of the past with peacebuilding in the present, the contract is based upon a series of principles that in summary prioritise respect for people both in the present and the past. A key outcome from the Corrymeela perspective lies in just bringing people together and creating a space in which participants can feel free to express themselves and listen to others with respect. For my part, what I hope for is simply for individuals to develop awareness that people in the

past—the Irish and English and Scots who for better or worse were compelled to engage with one another—had no foreknowledge of the present. The Troubles may seem an inevitable outcome of the Ulster Plantation from the perspective of the 21st century, but ‘doing history backwards’ reminds us that from the vantage point of 1609 or 1611 or 1630, the events of the late twentieth century were far from inevitable. Of far greater concern to the majority, of whatever identity, was negotiating the needs and realities of the day, from the quotidian to the creative.

As I have argued elsewhere (Horning 2006; 2014) the ambiguous character of Ireland’s colonial experience, and the way that Northern Ireland—evenly divided between communities who each see themselves as the marginalised other—challenges blanket assumptions about Ireland’s current postcoloniality and provides a space within which to complicate overly prescriptive understandings of colonial entanglements. As archaeologists begin to more willingly engage with Ireland’s later historical archaeology, whether as part of the inclusive practice outlined above or simply beginning to acknowledge that the material remains of the last 500 years have heritage value, there is potential to both inform and engage with the archaeologies of other nations and places grappling with colonial legacies and postcolonial formulations, as considered below.

Exploring Global Practice

Historical archaeology is increasingly taking root around the world, but invariably these efforts are entwined with contemporary political issues and power struggles. Very real differences in culture, regional histories, and especially engagements with the West all combine to ensure distinctive practices and trajectories. Calls for an overarching global historical archaeology to replace narrow, local studies falter in the face of this diversity,

underscoring one of Frederick Cooper's criticisms of globalisation as an analytic category: "That global should be contrasted to local, even if the point is to analyse their mutual constitution, only underscores the inadequacy of current analytical tools to analyse anything in between" (Cooper 2005:93). Rather than the emergence of globalised historical archaeology, what we see instead are a range of practices and influences very much contingent upon the local context of their emergence, but with the potential, often demonstrated, to be translated and transformed in other locales. For example, over the last two decades, the practices and concerns of historical archaeology in Australia and in South Africa have been particularly influential on the discipline at large. The emergence and strength of indigenous rights and the leadership role taken by Aboriginal archaeologists and communities has influenced the struggle for indigenous rights and control over heritage elsewhere (e.g., Fredriksen 2012), while the explicitly critical archaeologies emerging from South Africa (especially Schrire 1996; Hall 2000) have endeavoured to re-centre violence in considerations of colonialism in places like North America, where the strength of the dominant nationalist narrative obscures the reality of the same kinds of conflict and inequality seemingly so much more apparent in post-Apartheid South Africa.

Important lessons are being drawn from historical archaeology elsewhere on the African continent, which is taking place within a wide range of contemporary cultural settings and addressing diverse histories. Efforts to decolonise African archaeology increasingly and productively explore African constructions of history and identity that often sit at odds with Western understandings of African histories and cultures (Jopela and Fredriksen 2015; Lane 2011, 2014; Schmidt 2014; Ogundiran 2007; Déme and Guéye 2007). Present-day inequality and conflict also significantly influence archaeological practices, as acknowledged by Peter Schmidt (2010:270), given the "deep-seated tension between our

practice as scientific archaeologists and our behavior as sentient humans with friends and collaborators who are daily suffering from the depredations of disease or poor water or authoritarian rule – whatever the affliction.” Pragmatism, as addressed above, becomes particularly important in such circumstances and has led to the productive coupling of heritage practice with economic sustainability (e.g., Breen 2014; Breen and Rhodes 2010).

Within Europe, archaeological attention is increasingly being paid to twentieth-century conflicts. Innumerable archaeological investigations have been launched examining the battlefields and landscape associated with World War I in tandem with its centenary. The Spanish Civil War (1936-39) has commanded intensive investigations and no shortage of tension, given the highly politicised character of that conflict and the subsequent legacies of the Franco regime (Gonzalez-Ruibal 2007). Similarly, and even more challenging, have been the efforts of historical archaeologists to address the material legacies of Nazism, and in particular the archaeology of concentration camps (Theune 2013, 2015). In Northern Ireland, we are currently struggling with how best to commemorate the anniversaries not just of World War I, but of the 1916 Easter Rising, which ultimately led to partition of the island. Until very recently, understandings of Irish engagement in the Great War were grounded in sectarianism. The massive casualties experienced by Ulster regiments at the Somme, which still impact family and community memories, gave support to a narrative that only northern Protestants volunteered as soldiers. Such a narrative allowed for the convenient forgetting of a more complicated history in which Catholics from north and south also participated, notwithstanding armed internal rebellion against the British state the official neutrality of the newly emerging Irish state. In the post-Troubles period, it has become increasingly possible, if not straightforward, to also begin to look at the material legacies of The Troubles, as productively explored by Laura McAtackney (2014), and to

combine these explorations with efforts at conflict transformation as discussed earlier in this article.

Moving back away from Ireland and from Europe, in the discussion that follows, I want to briefly reflect on a selection of other locales where historical archaeology is developing in ways that hold the potential to significantly shift the direction of the discipline as a whole. Clearly, research questions inevitably vary according to geographic locale, while at the same time the manner of knowledge-making and dissemination is also heavily dependent upon cultural practice and values, one example being the centrality of mentoring in academic writing as presented by Devendra and Muthucumurama (2013) in their overview of maritime archaeology in Sri Lanka. Elsewhere in the Indian subcontinent, the shadow of empire continues to hang over efforts to pursue historical archaeology. Historical archaeology, to put it simply, is not an easy sell because it is *de facto* understood as the archaeology of empire and the archaeology of oppression. Particularly telling is the fact that in a volume entitled *Historical Archaeology of India* (Dhavalikar 1999), which describes itself as the only study “which covers all the aspects of historical archaeology from ca. 1000BC to 1800AD,” the term ‘British’ does not appear in the index and only in the context of the formation of the archaeological survey of India in the text, while the East India Company warrants only a single mention. Europe is referenced only in relation to the widespread climate downturn (so called Little Ice Age) and its probable impacts in India (Dhavalikar 1999:119).

The lack of interest in and consideration of the archaeology of the period of British imperial domination of India comes as no real surprise given India’s postcolonial status and the centrality of nationalism. That the discipline of archaeology was “institutionalized in India by the colonial British rulers” (Selvakumar 2010:469) further complicates efforts to

approach the colonial-period archaeology within the present-day political and institutional structures. Those structures do include government support for archaeology via the venerable Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), established under British rule in 1861 but recast after independence as “simultaneously both a post-colonial bureaucratic institution and an organisation that produces archaeological knowledge” (Chadha 2010:231). The ASI faces an uphill battle not just to deflect the legacy of its own origins, but crucially also in not being seen merely to produce the archaeological knowledge sought by India’s political elite. The reputation of the ASI was clearly tarnished by its integral role in the Ajothya controversy.

At present, the rapid urbanisation and development currently underway in India poses an immense threat to the built fabric and below ground archaeology of the last five hundred years in particular. There are encouraging signs, however. Government funding has been made available to explore and support capacity building and sustainability focusing on urban heritage. Indian heritage legislation (unlike that of the Republic of Ireland), provides for any site or monument older than 100 years to be considered archaeological. Wider recognition of the heritage value of later historical sites remains dependent upon acceptance of the notion that the material legacies of the British Empire are relevant to the contemporary Indian population, insofar as it is their own ancestors whose lives were lived and meaningfully constructed within the constraints and inequities of that Empire. One interesting (albeit very pragmatic) exception to this general disinterest in colonial material heritage lies in the preservation and presentation of the built heritage of Tranquebar in south India, once a Danish trading port from 1620-1845. As explored by Helle Jørgensen (2013), the dominant narrative of Scandinavian colonialism being somehow ‘kinder and gentler’ underpins touristic presentations of Tranquebar, geared predominantly towards

western (often Danish) visitors. Those visitors provide a considerable economic boost to the region.

Far more complicated even than pursuing later historical archaeology in India are efforts to address the legacies of colonialism in East Asia, where, as discussed by Koji Mizoguchi (2006; 2010), Japanese archaeologists in particular have to deal not only with the legacies of Western colonialism in the region, but also the role of Japan as a colonising force in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Paradoxically, as he argues, scholarly reliance on Marxist theoretical frameworks in interpreting the archaeology of earlier periods “allowed Japanese people and Japanese archaeologists to insulate themselves and to forget their (or Japan’s) colonial activities in Korea and China.” At present, the forces of globalisation and a movement away from reliance on Marxist models has created a situation where “Japanese archaeologists are struggling to recognize, self-examine, and amend colonial legacies and to find ways to confront reemergent nationalistic sentiments” (Mizoguchi 2010, 89). Greater awareness of Japan’s ambiguous relationship with colonialism, as both a colonising force and non-Western ‘other’, has the potential to significantly advance discourse over historical archaeologies of colonialism elsewhere in the world.

Similarly, the archaeology of the Ottoman Empire serves as another critical check on narrow understandings of colonialism (Baram and Carroll 2000; Carroll 2010) framed by a Western view of orientalism (Said 1978). Notwithstanding the challenges posed by present-day regional sociopolitics, interest in the contemporary archaeology of some parts of the Middle East is beginning to intersect with social critiques. For example, a collaborative Iranian-British project (Young and Fazzeli 2013) has recently employed archaeological and ethnographic research into landlord villages (enclosed settlements that were abandoned

during the White Revolution of the 1970s) to address issues of gender and class. Such critical attention to inequality in the recent past carries a more than implicit critique of the present.

Even more immediate (and risky) in its implications is the thoughtful analysis by Iranian archaeologists Maryam DezhmKhooy Leila Papoli Yazdi (2010) of the ruins of the houses destroyed in the 2003 Bam earthquake, and the personal narratives of their inhabitants. Building on this research, Yazdi (2010: 44) also considered the material evidence for household behaviour in light of the extreme divide between the public and the private self in Iran. She notes that “Iranians carefully conceal aspects of their lives that must be hidden as they are contrary to both tradition and the law. The public appearance of these aspects of life can have dangerous results... These practices of concealment result in paradoxical behavioral patterns between how people act inside their homes and how they act outside their homes. As with most aspects of human behavior, these patterns leave signs and markers in material culture.” This research shares much in common with historical archaeology as it has developed in North America: a focus on the household and on illuminating the lives of people who are poorly documented. But no matter how empirically grounded in the very materiality of the household archaeologies of pre-earthquake Bam, the decision by Yazdi and DezhmKhooy to undertake such a study must be understood as a political action. In this example, contemporary historical archaeology poses an explicit threat to the socio-political order of contemporary Iran by undermining assumptions about compliance with legislated behaviour.

Conclusion

Historical archaeology is now practised, in some form, in much of the world today. But what will it look like in the decades to come? What I hope is that the discipline will continue to embed itself in a range of forms around the globe, and I particularly hope that practitioners based in the historic cores of the discipline, North America and the British Isles, become more open to and engaged with alternative formulations for the study of the last five hundred years. Fundamentally the recent past matters, as is abundantly clear from the contested nature of the period and of the evidence in so many parts of the world. Without doubt, my view on the value of historical archaeology is shaped by my own contingent practice living and working in a post-conflict society. My desire as a citizen to contribute to conflict resolution and peacebuilding influences my professional practice and my understanding of the role of the past in the present. I have found archaeology to be, perhaps surprisingly, not just relevant to the present but at times positively transformative. A willingness to acknowledge this power and potential, be it complicating postcolonial constructions of nationhood in Ireland or India, challenging gender discrimination in Iran, or combating poverty and inequality in the United States, will provide a valuable point of convergence for an increasingly diverse and dynamic discipline.

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